

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Final Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

Temporary Supply of Incremental Level 4 Water to Willow Creek Mutual Water Company for Wetlands Management



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region

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Mission Statements

The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes and our commitment to island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AF | acre feet |
| APE | Area of Potential Effect |
| BO | Biological Opinion |
| CNDDB | California Natural Diversity Database |
| Company | Willow Creek Mutual Water Company |
| CVO | Central Valley Office (Reclamation) |
| CVP | Central Valley Project |
| CVPIA | Central Valley Project Improvement Act |
| Drain | Colusa Basin Drain |
| DWR | California Department of Water Resources |
| ESA | Federal Endangered Species Act |
| FWCA | Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act |
| GGS | giant garter snake |
| gpm | gallons per minute |
| ITA | Indian Trust Assets |
| MBTA | Migratory Bird Treaty Act |
| mg/l | milligrams per liter |
| M&I | Municipal & Industrial |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NHPA | National Historic Preservation Act |
| NRHP | National Register of Historic Places |
| NWR | National Wildlife Refuge |
| PID | Provident Irrigation District |
| Reclamation | Bureau of Reclamation |
| Service | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| SJV | San Joaquin Valley |
| SNWR | Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge |
| SWP | State Water Project |
| SWRCB | State Water Resources Control Board |
| WA | Wildlife Area |

Section 1 Purpose and Need for Action

1.1 Introduction

The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) proposes to enter into a temporary water service contract (three-year renewable) with the Willow Creek Mutual Water Company (Company) to provide up to 3,000 acre-feet (AF) of Incremental Level 4 Water per year (July 1 to October 31) for wetland habitat management purposes at no cost to the Company. Reclamation purchases Incremental Level 4 Water from willing sellers for wildlife refuges under the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) Section 3406(d)(2). The proposed action is being undertaken pursuant to, and would be in full compliance with, Section 3406(d) (106 Stat. 4706) of CVPIA, which authorizes new water supply contracts for fish and wildlife purposes.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The proposed temporary action's primary purpose would be to deliver water to enhance migratory waterfowl habitat within the Company's service area. A secondary purpose is to maintain wetlands linking the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (Sacramento NWR) and the Colusa Basin Drain (Drain), a migration corridor for the federally listed giant garter snake (GGS).

Approximately 63 properties included within the Company's service area have entered into individual perpetual conservation easements with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for the maintenance and use of the land and waters for the management of migratory birds; however, these properties currently lack a reliable water supply. Collectively, the 63 properties total approximately 4,000 acres and are referred to as the Willow Creek-Lurline Wildlife Management Area. The Service considers the Company's easement lands as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Central Valley of California and subject to its laws and regulations, thereby supporting the objectives of Central Valley Joint Venture pursuant to CVPIA Section 3406(d). The Company's total area is 7,000 acres (Figure 1).

The need for the proposed action arises from the Company's loss of its annual surface water supply provided by the Provident Irrigation District (PID).

Background

Reclamation is obligated to provide certain quantities of water to specific federal, State and privately owned/managed Central Valley wetlands and wildlife habitats (refuges) pursuant to CVPIA, Public Law 102-575, Title 34, Section 3406(d). These water supplies are identified through three water categories: Level 2, Incremental Level 4, and full Level 4. Level 2 water type represents the historical annual average of water delivered to these refuges and is the amount necessary to maintain the refuges in their

condition prior to release of the Refuge Water Supply Investigations Report, March 1989 (Reclamation). Level 2 is sometimes referred to as the “base supply.” Full Level 4 water type represents the amount of water required for optimum wetlands and wildlife habitat development. The incremental difference between Level 2 and full Level 4 is referred to as Incremental Level 4 water. Level 2 water is provided primarily from Central Valley Project water. Incremental Level 4 water must be acquired by Reclamation from various options, usually through water acquisitions on the open market from willing sellers.

Reclamation has not yet been able to meet its CVPIA obligation to provide full Level 4 water supplies to the refuges, due to several factors. The greater need for Incremental Level 4 supplies is with the refuges located south-of-Delta (SOD) in the San Joaquin Valley due to Incremental Level 4 allocations comprising a much higher percentage of the overall full Level 4 allocation for SOD refuges than north-of-Delta (NOD) refuges. Reclamation places a higher priority on water acquisitions for SOD refuges due to this fact, and will continue to do so until Reclamation is able to meet its full Level 4 obligation under CVPIA.

Subsequent to passage of CVPIA, Reclamation entered into water supply contracts with the three CVPIA refuge managing agencies (the Service, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and Grassland Water District) for the purpose of delivering water supplies to these refuges. The term “Incremental Level 4” first appears in these water supply contracts. One of the provisions in the water supply contracts provides for the establishment of the Interagency Refuge Water Management Team (IRWMT), consisting of a representative from each refuge managing agency and Reclamation. One of the primary functions of the IRWMT is to determine how available Incremental Level 4 supplies will be prioritized and allocated to the refuges.

In September of 2005, Reclamation purchased 3,000 AF of permanent water from the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District (ACID), referred to as the ACID Purchase, for Incremental Level 4 water supplies to be delivered to the refuges through Reclamation’s CVPIA Refuge Water Supply Program (RWSP). ACID is one of the Sacramento River Settlement Contractors with Reclamation. The ACID Purchase water is available for delivery annually during the original contract delivery time period under the settlement contract between ACID and Reclamation, March through October. Reclamation’s primary purpose for this water was to deliver these supplies to the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area (WA) as part of its Incremental Level 4 allocation under CVPIA. The Gray Lodge WA presently does not have adequate external conveyance capacity for delivery of full Level 4 water supplies. Reclamation is currently undertaking a conveyance facilities improvement construction project to provide full Level 4 capacity to the Gray Lodge WA. The target completion date is 2013. Reclamation expects to deliver the ACID Purchase water to Gray Lodge WA upon completion of the construction project. Reclamation has delivered some of the ACID Purchase water to the Delevan National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in three of the four water years since this water was purchased.

The Company's easement lands receive both surface water and groundwater. Prior to 2005, the Company received up to 5,000 AF of reliable surface water supplies from PID for delivery to the conservation easement lands within the Company's service area. The PID water supply is no longer available to the Company, because PID's demand for this water has increased as a result of changed cropping patterns. Occasionally, PID may be able to provide water to the company, if available, but the supply is unreliable. The Company also receives surface water supplies from other sources for delivery to the easement lands depending on availability, including regional rice tail water.

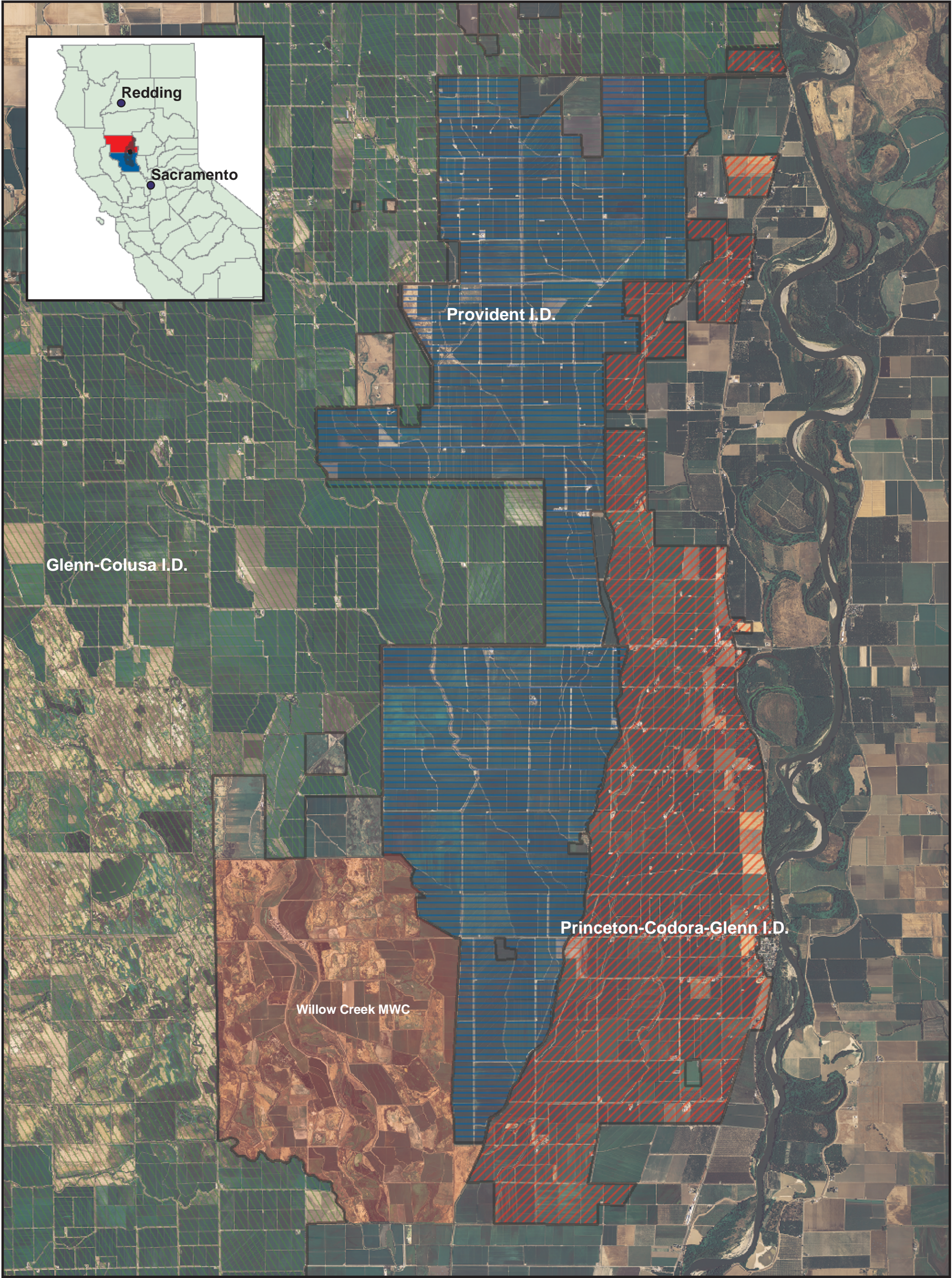
1.3 Potential Resource Issues

The resource areas listed below have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Action and are discussed further in Section 3.





- Surface Water Resources
- Land Use
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Indian Trust Assets
- Environmental Justice
- Climate Change

1.4 Resources Not Analyzed in Detail

It was determined that the following resources would not be impacted by the Proposed Action: water quality, groundwater, fisheries, recreation, air quality, geology and soils, visual, transportation, noise, hazards and hazardous materials, and socioeconomics. Therefore, impacts to these resources are not analyzed in this Environmental Assessment.



Legend

-  Willow Creek MWC
-  Provident I.D.
-  Glenn-Colusa I.D.
-  Princeton-Codora-Glenn I.D.



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Figure 1-Proposed Project Area